



Personal Reflections

1/25/2019

Dear IMSA Community,

Welcome back to a new calendar year, Happy 2019! In recent days, I have greeted and spoken to many students and staff about their break and about their experiences during Intersession. Most shared with me how much they enjoyed their Intersession workshops, activities, and trips. I want to give a special thank you to all who were involved in these activities, including our Intersession leaders, alumni, administrators and administrative staff who supported Intersession. Thank you!

As I have mentioned in earlier Personal Reflections, I am taking the opportunity through these writings to expand on IMSA's priorities for 2018-2019. In previous Reflections, I have written about three priorities:

- [United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [International Strategy](#)
- [Equity and Excellence Policy](#)

Today, I want to highlight and amplify our IMSA Innovation Campus, Phase 1 priority. When I joined IMSA as president in 2014, we began to consider how we might diversify our revenue. This effort led us to explore the possibility of new residential halls through the recruitment of non-Illinois students to IMSA. During our exploration, we began to recognize and realize that IMSA's campus sits on over 90 acres of land.

What could we do to maximize returns from this plot of land? How could we expand our mission to "ignite and nurture creative, ethical, scientific minds to advance the human condition" by utilizing our land in more strategic ways? Could we, for example, follow in the steps of the University of Illinois to develop an innovation or technology park where research organizations and/or companies could build on our campus and secure access to a continuing stream of talented IMSA students? Many universities and companies seek to recruit our IMSA alumni. Wouldn't it make sense for them to have a "presence" in Aurora and begin to recruit students early during their IMSA secondary experiences, not waiting for them to graduate from college?

IMSA Innovation Campus

As I mentioned above, IMSA sits on over 90 acres of land and has considerable open space that readily supports future site development. When imagining what IMSA would look like in the next 30 years, we began to consider how the development of our site could be a major element of the innovation ecosystem in the Chicagoland region. A key outcome of such a development on the IMSA Campus is an increase in opportunities for research, innovation, partnerships, and entrepreneurship at IMSA.



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We have explored many different opportunities for the development of this property and have created guidance for a five-phase approach to this long-term development effort. Before I delve into Phase I, let me summarize the remaining four phases which include the creation of an onsite research park with its own campus entry and identity; expanded facilities for Student Inquiry and Research (SIR), the Center for Teaching and Learning (formerly known as Professional Field Services) and the Steve and Jamie Chen Center for Innovation and Inquiry. A drawing depicting the full five-phase development can be seen [here](#). Phase I is outlined in the red box.

IMSA Innovation Campus, Phase 1 – Residential Hall(s)

Phase I of this effort is to construct a residential facility to replace all current failing residential halls as well as to increase capacity for future tuition-paying non-Illinois students. IMSA's seven Residence Halls are more than 30 years old, having surpassed their expected usage. As such, IMSA is required to annually invest approximately \$700,000 in maintenance costs. The cost to make these buildings useful for the next 10 to 15 years would exceed \$37 million. Even with this investment, we would still have structures that would be 40 years old, buildings that are far beyond their original expected life span.

IMSA needs to replace the halls with a new hall (or multiple halls) to accommodate 800 students and 50 educators for short-term stays at the Academy while they receive training at IMSA. A new hall will include: common space for students, study area, living room area, a large community center, recreation facility, and a wireless lounge and gaming area. This project is essential to IMSA's ability to remain a premier teaching and learning laboratory for the State of Illinois, to deliver high quality programs and services to students and teachers throughout the State, and to provide for the safety and welfare of our students who live on campus 24 hours a day.

We have begun on Phase I of this development effort. On February 4, 2019 a design charrette is scheduled and will be managed by an architectural partner. This activity will allow us to gather needs and recommendations from our stakeholders including trustees, faculty and staff, students, alumni and parents on how the new residential facilities may look and function. The outcomes of this charrette will help guide the project design. We are also meeting with IMSA student council to plan a separate session with students to get more directed input from our current student body.

Residential Halls—Background

The IMSA residence halls continue to be riddled with issues, which have their origins in their initial construction. A few examples of these issues are:

- They are built on poor soils and the base in many areas was either not compacted, or compacted with improper stone.



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- Many rooms in two halls (1506 and 1507) have sagging drywall ceilings and major cracks attributed to rushed installation. Two residence halls (1502 and 1506) suffered major damage in 2014 to the interior and exterior when fire system pipes burst in the winter. Five halls (1501-1505) have major water infiltration issues.
- Carpets and flooring were installed with no moisture mitigation, causing much of the carpets and vinyl to peel up.
- All lower and small roofs on the residence halls are made up of original building asphalt shingle. The shingles are nearly 30 years old, well past their 20 years of useful life. These smaller roofs sit over the student rooms and cause leaks of both water and air.
- Residence hall condensing units are original to the buildings, and are failing. They use R22 refrigerant, which will not be made after 2019. The units constantly leak and breakdown.

For all of the above reasons, in the short term, we envision an IMSA Innovation Campus developed over the next few decades that may include academic buildings for use by IMSA day students, student research, and the Centers for Teaching and Learning and Innovation and Inquiry. In the short term, we envision a new residence hall (s) that will serve Illinois students for the next half a century.

Finally, we are very grateful for a much-needed renovation of the IMSA auditorium with the help of the IMSA Fund and the “Save a Seat Campaign.” When you “Save A Seat” at the IMSA Auditorium,” the IMSA Fund will match your donation dollar for dollar up to \$100,000. All gifts are fully tax-deductible. [Click here](#) to learn more.

I hope that you are excited for the future of IMSA as I am! Many thanks for your continued interest and support.

Respectfully,

José M. Torres, Ph.D.
President